# Marketing Your Library

O. Gene Norman, Head
Reference Department
Indiana State University Library
Terre Haute, IN

If the material presented in the local media is any gauge, it would seem that every nonprofit organization today is concerned with marketing. Hospital ads on radio remind us that the hospital operates one of the largest restaurants and laundries in town; college personnel appear on television to discuss the advantages of their educational programs; and churches place ads in newspapers inviting readers to attend their services.

What is marketing? Why should libraries be concerned with it? A business definition can be found in Jerry M. Rosenberg's *Dictionary of Business and Management*. He defines the term as "activities that accelerate the movement of goods and services from the manufacturer to the consumer."[1] By comparison, Philip Kotler in his *Marketing for Nonprofit Organizations* defines marketing as ". . . the effective management by an organization of its exchange relations with its various markets and publics."[2] However, the definition that this author prefers for libraries is William M. Pride's description of the marketing concept. In his *Marketing: Concepts and Decisions*, Pride states that: "According to the marketing concept an organization should try to satisfy the needs of customers or clients through a coordinated set of activities that at the same time allows the organization to achieve its goals."[3] In other words, Pride and Kotler are saying that marketing involves more than selling and advertising. It is a way of planning and managing an organization.

When did the practice of marketing begin? Some aspects of marketing have been occurring since Biblical times. You will recall Moses' informal market survey of "the land of Canaan." He sent men to examine the land, observe the characteristics of the people, check for availability of wood, and gather a sample of the "fruit" produced.[4]

However, the idea of the marketing concept, of satisfying the needs of customers or clients, was not adopted by the business world until the 1950s. The marketing era followed the production era of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the sales era which occurred during the 1920s to the beginning of the 1950s. The production era emphasized efficiency in output and the sales era stressed the function of selling goods and services.

142

Libraries have had an interest in publicity, public relations, and other specific aspects of marketing for many years, but articles dealing with libraries and the marketing concept did not begin to appear until the early 1970s.[5] Significantly, this was soon after Philip Kotler and Sidney Levy's classic article on marketing techniques for non-profit groups in the January 1969 issue of the *Journal of Marketing*.[6] Toward the latter half of the 1970s and early 1980s, a great deal has been written about marketing libraries which seems to be an indication of increased interest in the topic.[7]

## Activities and Programs Involved in Marketing

Activities and programs involved in marketing a library include: (1) gathering and analyzing marketing information to determine the needs of the library; (2) designing a program around the marketing mix of product, price, place or distribution, and promotion; and (3) managing the marketing program. Marketing information can come from a number of sources. Library personnel can be stationed at the door to survey the needs of users, or librarians can observe users in a specific part of the library to see what materials they use and how they use them. (I understand that the need to remedy static cling in clothing was discovered by this observation method.) Internal and external statistical data also can be useful. For example, usage statistics gathered for a specific periodical can provide another input to help determine whether the title should be retained if a question arises about it in the future. Sometimes, a library has an opportunity to experiment with or test a publication or service by making it available on a trial basis. One product which recently has been made available to libraries in this form is the *Magazine Index*.

## Designing a Marketing Program

When sufficient information has been gathered to determine the needs of library users, a program can be designed around the marketing mix of product, price, place or distribution, and promotion. The product is the materials and services offered by a library. In a survey conducted by this author during Spring 1981, sixteen Indiana and Illinois libraries identified 54 types of products which they offered to the public. The products ranged from books and periodicals to computer terminals and a television station. Products have life cycles during which they grow, mature, and eventually decline in utility. Consequently, an institution must consistently evaluate its products to determine if they need to be continued, modified, or withdrawn. A new product may need to be added occasionally to satisfy the users' needs. An example of a new service recently added to many

libraries is online database service which helps to cut down the user's search time.

The price aspect of the marketing mix includes monetary and non-monetary charges. The survey revealed that sixteen libraries charged collectively for a total of eighteen services or items. These services included photocopying; online database service; overdue, damaged, or lost books and materials; and some interlibrary loan materials. Of course, libraries provide many materials and services free, but non-monetary costs may be present such as psychological, time, or location barriers. If access to materials and services is inconvenient or if using them presents an emotional problem usage will be reduced considerably.

The place variable of the marketing mix concerns the location of a library, the storage of materials, and the distribution of materials and services. Librarians at all but one of the libraries surveyed believed that the location of their libraries was suitable for the needs of users, and the one library was in the process of getting a new centrally located facility. All libraries surveyed utilized interlibrary loan service as one means of distribution, but only twelve of the sixteen renewed books by telephone. Products need to be conveniently available and accessible to users whether they be in a main building, a branch, a mobile unit, or in the form of direct mail. Peter Drucker clearly stated the need of the place element in the January 1976 issue of *College & Research Libraries*: "A really functional library is one where people can better circulate, find what they want, and get people in, but to get them out again, satisfied."[8]

Major elements of the promotion component of the marketing mix include advertising, publicity, personal selling, packaging, and sales promotion. The means of promotion which the largest number of libraries surveyed found effective was personal selling, but publicity in newspapers was a close second choice. Personal selling can be utilized at the Reference Desk, through bibliographic instruction, or in a committee meeting. Recently, Indiana State University attempted to improve its packaging by replacing many of its signs with larger and more colorful ones. The letters for the sign with the message "REFERENCE ASK HERE" are approximately the size of the original sign. One librarian has protested that the sign is too big, but no one has complained that they cannot read it.

Few libraries pay for advertising in the news media, but occasionally, they will give away a coupon for a free computer search which falls under the category of sales promotion. For the past seven years, Indiana State University has conducted an annual direct mail campaign to faculty and administrators which this author calls "Bibliographies by Campus Mail."[9] A checklist of some 50 bibliographies available in the library is mailed to each faculty member

and administrator. They only need to note the number of specific bibliographies desired and return the checklist to the Reference Department. When the checklists are returned, copies of bibliographies are forwarded to them by campus mail. Since the response rate has ranged from 9 to 21 percent, it is a successful program, especially when compared with bulk mailers' average response of 2 percent.[10]

## Managing the Marketing Program

To maintain an éffective marketing program, a management system must be developed to facilitate and expedite exchanges effectively and efficiently. First, a plan should be set up to assess opportunities and to determine marketing objectives. This will help keep the library from drifting into an uncertain future. One objective might be to initiate a bibliographic instruction program for graduate English students during the next semester. Another objective could involve providing useful information during the next year to senior citizens in the community. Both of these objectives allow the librarian to target a specific group, or segment, of the library community as opposed to a shotgun approach which often does not satisfy the needs of the user. Objectives should be written so that they can be measured with some accuracy, and they should indicate when the objective should be accomplished.

Exchanges with the user cannot begin until the plan is implemented. Successful implementation of a marketing plan usually depends upon coordination of activities, motivation of personnel, and effective communication with the library. Coordination can be improved if each library employee is made aware of how one job relates to another and how each person's actions contribute to the success of the marketing plan. For example, the bibliographic instruction program for graduate English students may be successful only if a qualified librarian is free to teach it.

Most employees work to satisfy physical, psychological, and social needs, and library personnel probably are no exception. Motivation of individuals usually depends upon the satisfaction of such needs. It is especially important that the plan to motivate personnel be fair, that it provide incentives, and that it be understood by everyone. If the librarian who manages the marketing program does not communicate well, he or she will have difficulty in motivating personnel as well as coordinating the activities. To direct the marketing program successfully, the librarian must be able to communicate effectively with all levels of the library and the community.

To insure the achievement of the marketing objectives set, a system of control must be available to the librarian. The marketing control process involves establishing performance standards, evaluating the actual performance by comparing it with the standard, and attempting to bring the desired and the actual performance into agreement. For example, the bibiliographic instruction program for graduate English students may become a reality only if the librarian is able to convince the professor that it is needed for his class.

## Conclusion

A significant number of writers seem to agree that marketing concepts and techniques can be a useful tool for academic and other libraries. However, each institution must design its own marketing scheme to fit its own needs. To be successful, marketing requires the participation of all library personnel. It especially is important that the program be led and supported by the library administration in analyzing needs, planning and developing programs, and evaluating the marketing system. If these activities are done carefully, one may eventually agree with Steuart Henderson Gritt who was quoted as saying: "Doing business without advertising is like winking at a girl in the dark. You know what you are doing, but nobody else does."[11]

## Notes

[1] Jerry M. Rosenberg, *Dictionary of Business and Management* (New York: Wiley, 1978), 277.

[2] Philip Kotler, *Marketing for Nonprofit Organizations*, 2d ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1982), xiii.

[3] William M. Pride, *Marketing: Concepts and Decisions* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1980), 13.

[4] Nu. 13: 1-33.

[5] O. Gene Norman, "Marketing Libraries and Information Services: An Annotated Guide to the Literature," *RSR: Reference Services Review* 10 (Spring 1982): 69-80.

[6] Philip Kotler and Sidney J. Levy, "Broadening the Concept of Marketing," *Journal of Marketing* 33 (January 1969): 10-15.

[7] Norman, "Marketing Libraries and Information Services, " 70.

[8] Peter F. Drucker, "Managing the Public Service Institution," *College & Research Libraries* 37 (January 1976): 7.

[9] O. Gene Norman, *Bibliographies by Campus Mail* (Arlington VA: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 148 339, 1977).

[10] Choong H. Kim, *Books By Mail: A Handbook for Libraries* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977), 43-44.

[11] Edward F. Murphy, *The Crown Treasury of Relevant Quotations* (New York: Crown, 1978), 15.